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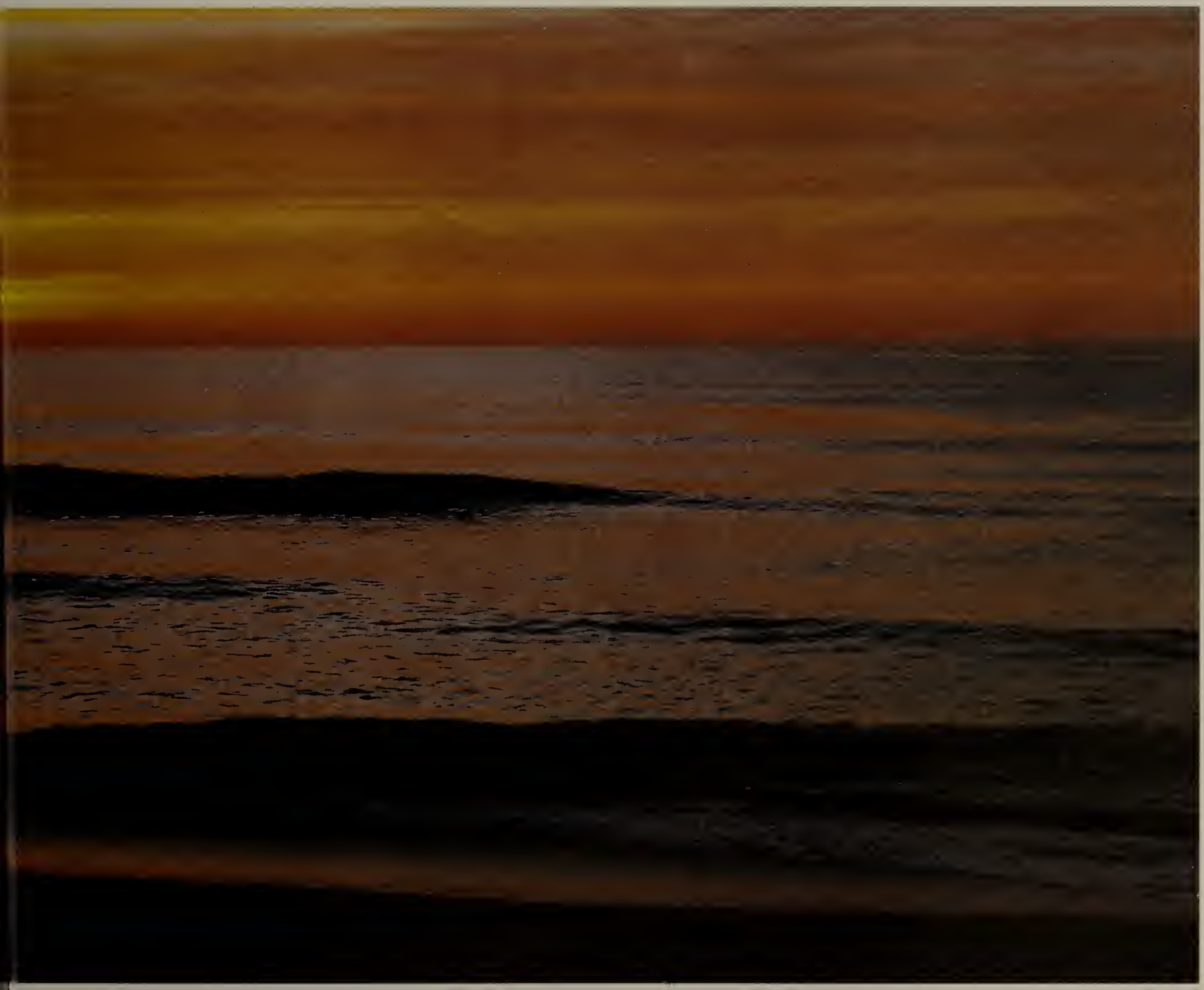
Massachusetts Coastal Land Inventory

Extent and Distribution of Publicly Owned Shoreline



Commonwealth of Massachusetts **Department of Environmental Management** Division of Resource Conservation

Massachusetts Coastal Land Inventory

Extent and Distribution of Publicly Owned Shoreline

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Michael S. Dukakis, *Governor*

Executive Office of
Environmental Affairs
John P. DeVillars, *Secretary*

Department of
Environmental Management
Richard Kendall, *Commissioner*

DEM Division of Resource
Conservation
Rodney L. Brown, *Project Manager*
Timothy Smith, Lara Vergoth,
Contributing Authors

DEM Communications Office
Peter O'Neil, *Editor*
Fred Saraiva, *Graphic Design*

Photographs by:
Karst Hoogeboom
Rodney Brown
Gene Peach

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management

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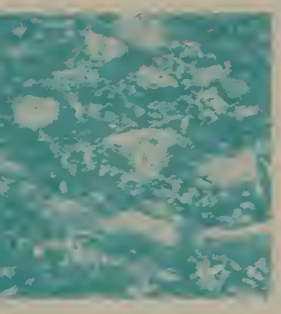
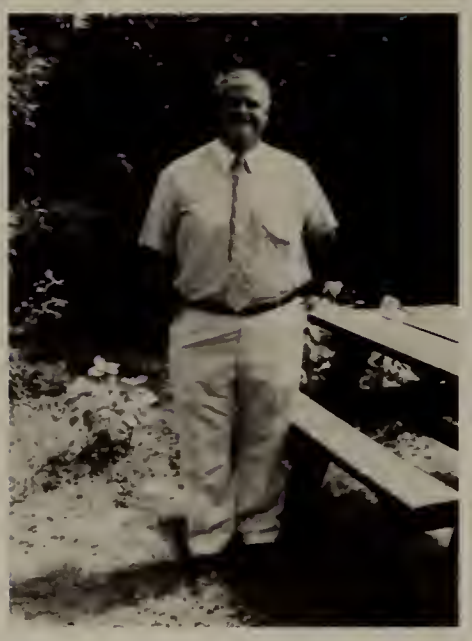
From the Commissioner





The Department of Environmental Management works to provide protection for our natural resources and recreational opportunities for our citizens. When it comes to the 1,350-mile Massachusetts coastline, the challenge of meeting those two goals is especially demanding.

As part of our effort to both protect and provide access to the coast, DEM conducted the survey that is detailed in this report. The survey shows how extensive private ownership of coastal properties, along with a 300-year old law that is unique to Massachusetts and Maine, combine to restrict public access. They also combine to force state agencies such as DEM to be as creative and resourceful as possible in meeting its goal of providing ample access to and protection of the coast.

Our analysis shows that only about one-quarter of the Massachusetts coastline is in public ownership. Less than half of that total — or about 10% of the state's entire coast — is truly accessible to all members of the public. This situation of short supply mixed with great demand has produced major coastal access problems.

The limited supply places intense stress on the portions of the shore that are available for public use. This stress and overcrowding threatens the environmental integrity of the beaches and clearly lessens the pleasure of a typical day at the beach.

As development and other pressures on coastal land increase, its value as real estate has risen dramatically. Consequently, the cost to the state to provide for the recreational needs of its citizens — and also to protect its natural resources — has risen accordingly. The seemingly simple solution of providing more beaches, or protecting more fragile coastal areas, by buying more land along the coast is extremely expensive.

Further complicating the problem is a 17th century ordinance that sets Massachusetts apart from almost every other coastal state in the nation in its treatment of coastal property. This Colonial Ordinance, must be understood if one is to fully appreciate the issues the state faces in making more of the coast accessible to the public.

Originally intended to encourage upland property owners to build the maritime facilities necessary to ensure the economic vitality of a growing nation, the Colonial Ordinance allows private owners along the shore to prevent all public uses except those of "fishing, fowling, and navigation" between the mean high tide and the low tide.

Under this law, only those individuals fortunate enough to own property are guaranteed access to coastal frontage to enjoy such popular activities as swimming, sunbathing, or just walking and scenic viewing. Public ownership of coastal lands removes those barriers and is thus a critical element in the effort to provide public access to our coastal waters.

But solving the access problem strictly through land acquisition is a costly solution. The Massachusetts legislature in 1987 set aside $40 million for DEM to use for the acquisition of coastal lands. This money funds DEM's coastal program, which is designed to identify and acquire sites along the coast for purposes of active and passive recreation, and for the preservation of areas of scenic beauty and ecological significance.

An examination of some of the parcels DEM has acquired gives an indication of the variety of objectives that can be achieved through these acquisitions, as well as the geographic distribution of DEM's acquisition activities. Since 1988, DEM has successfully completed acquisitions of the following parcels:

- West Island, Fairhaven, 338 acres.
- South Beach, Edgartown, 55 acres.
- Quashnet River, Mashpee, 380 acres.

These parcels joined other coastal facilities which DEM oversees — Salisbury Beach, Horseneck Beach, Boston Harbor Islands State Park, Webb State Park, Plum Island State Reservation, Scusset Beach, Fort Phoenix, Demarest Lloyd State Park, Halibut Point State Park , and South Cape Beach.

There is clear and compelling evidence that these beaches, and many others along the Massachusetts coast, are under tremendous stress from overuse. Equally clear is the fact that public demand for such coastal recreation is not being met.

During the 1980s, DEM worked to help meet that demand by acquiring 1,981 acres of coastal lands at a cost of $35,350,000. Continued support of the coastal acquisition program will allow DEM to expand its ability to provide recreational activities along the coast and to protect senstive coastal areas.

The Colonial Ordinance, however, remains a daunting barrier to any inexpensive solution to the problem of coastal access and protection. Faced with that reality, DEM will continue to work to identify the areas of the coast where acquisitions can provide the greatest public benefit, both for recreation and environmental protection.

Richard E. Kendall

Richard E. Kendall, *Commissioner*

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Cover photo:

Sunrise over

Salisbury Beach.

(Photo by Gene

Peach)

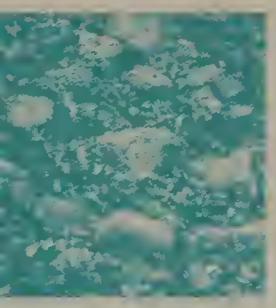
Part One

Publicly Owned Lands Along the Massachusetts Coastline

Extent and Distribution

1. Children build a sand castle at Horseneck Beach State Reservation in Westport.

Introduction



The Colonial Ordinance allows private owners along the shore to prevent all public uses except those of "fishing, fowling, and navigation" between the mean high tide and the low tide.

As in most coastal states, the coastline in Massachusetts is the focus of much attention, drama and controversy. The attractiveness and fragility that mark the coast often result in a struggle between the forces of preservation and development. The balancing of these competing interests inevitably shapes the desirability of the coast as a place to live and visit, and the ability of our coastal resources to absorb the ocean's powerful influence.

The ownership patterns found along the Massachusetts coast today reflect a recognition by all levels of government and several special interest groups of the strong need to protect of our coastal resources. The importance of public ownership along the Massachusetts shore in particular is magnified when one has full understanding of the implications of the Colonial Ordinance (also referred to as the Public Trust Doctrine), which establishes the ownership rights to coastal property in Massachusetts.

Established in 1647, the Colonial Ordinance provides an extension of upland property rights to the low water mark, while reserving public rights to the intertidal zone for purposes of fishing, hunting and navigating. Originally intended to encourage upland property owners to build the maritime facilities necessary to ensure the economic vitality of a growing nation, the Colonial Ordinance severely restricts the accessibility of the coastline for those recreational uses common to today's society.

The Colonial Ordinance allows private owners along the shore to prevent all public uses except those of "fishing, fowling, and navigation" between the mean high tide and the low tide. Thus, along some portions of the coast, only those individuals fortunate enough to own property can gain access to and utilize coastal frontage for such popular activities as swimming, sunbathing, or just walking and scenic viewing. Public ownership of coastal lands is thus a critical element in the effort to provide public accessibility to our coastal waters.

The Department of Environmental Management (DEM), other state and federal agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit land organizations are actively involved in an effort to promote the protection of and access to coastal resources through a variety of methods, including the acquisition of land. In 1986 and 1987 DEM undertook a study to determine the extent and distribution of publicly owned and protected lands along the coast.

The study involved a survey of land records for each municipality along the coast, and resulted in a comprehensive database (Coastal Property Inventory) listing coastal properties owned by public agencies or by private nonprofit land organizations dedicated to protecting these lands and making them accessible.

The data provided in this report has been compiled from the Coastal Property Inventory. It is presented here in the hope that it will lead to a heightened understanding of the role of coastal land protection and those organizations involved in protection efforts, and more knowledgeable coastal resource protection decision-making.

Inventory of Coastal Ownership

The Coastal Property Inventory is an effort to compile a database of information for every publicly owned coastal property in Massachusetts.

The Coastal Property Inventory is an effort to compile a database of information for every publicly owned coastal property in Massachusetts. For the purposes of this inventory "publicly owned" refers to all coastal properties that are owned by federal, state, county, or municipal governments, or by private nonprofit land conservation organizations dedicated to the protection of the land and public access.

The information, therefore, is not restricted solely to coastal beaches but includes any property along the coast that meets the ownership definition. In order to minimize errors to the greatest extent possible, the information contained in the inventory in most cases was obtained directly from the organizations owning coastal land, and has been checked against available town records.

The tables appearing in this report have been produced directly from the information contained in the Coastal Property Inventory. Most of the information provided here is compiled in terms of length of coastal frontage. Coastal frontage is preferable to acreage for purposes of describing the extent of protection afforded the coast.

2.

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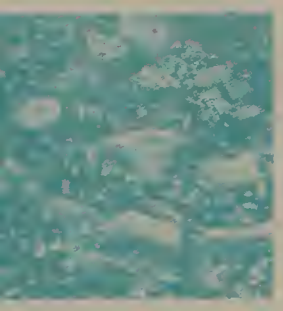
2. Casting away at Gooseberry Island at Horseneck Beach State Reservation in Westport.
3. The state's sometimes rocky coast can be a barrier to swimmers.

Coastline Defined



. . . "Coastal frontage" is that portion of the land bordering the ocean to the point where the ocean waters are restricted to a closure of 300 feet by opposing banks, . . .

In order to limit the area along the coast in which land ownership data is gathered, and to provide accurate frontage figures for comparison it is first necessary to define "coastal frontage."

For the purposes of this report, "coastal frontage" is that portion of the land bordering the ocean to the point where the ocean waters are restricted to a closure of 300 feet by opposing banks; or, in the case of large river mouths, where the waters flow under a bridge carrying a state road.

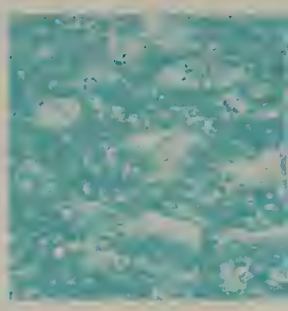
Exceptions to this definition include: Waquoit Bay in Falmouth, Popponesest Bay in Mashpee, West Bay in Barnstable, Apponaganset Bay in Dartmouth, Katama Bay and Cape Poge Bay in Edgartown, and Menemsha Pond in Tisbury. These areas are included in the coastal frontage figures in this report, even though the inlet for these bays are less than 300 feet, by virture of the large surface area characteristics exhibited by these waters and their proximity to the ocean. (Based on this definition, the statewide frontage figure and municipal frontage totals were determined by the computerized Massachusetts Geographic Information System, using U.S.G.S. topographic sheets as base information.)

Note: This definition for coastal frontage was developed to represent that portion of the Massachusetts coastline that exhibits an "ocean experience or feeling," and direct access to the ocean. Defining coastal frontage in this manner is useful for discussions concerning coastal recreation and accessibility issues, and in comparing the level of coastal protection in different areas of the Commonwealth.

4. An aerial view of a classic barrier beach, South Cape Beach in Mashpee.

5. A dune fights a losing battle against erosion at South Beach in Edgartown.

Conclusion



Clearly, there has been wide recognition of the importance of land ownership in influencing the use of the Massachusetts coastline.

As a result of the limitations imposed by the Colonial Ordinance, public use of the Commonwealth's shoreline is severely limited. While public activities involving fishing, hunting and navigating are allowed by right in the intertidal zone, private landowners along the coast are able to prevent any other activities from taking place.

In response to these limitations all levels of government and a number of nonprofit land conservation organizations have acted to protect a large portion of the coast. Of a total of 1,342 miles of coastal frontage statewide, 363 miles or 27% are protected through landownership. The bulk of the total publicly owned frontage is owned by individual municipalities (35.4%), followed by the federal government (27.1%), nonprofit land organizations (19%), state government (17.5%), and county government (0.9%).

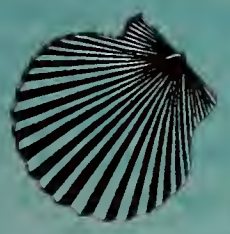
While Cape Cod contains the bulk of the Commonwealth's total coastal frontage (427 miles or 31.8% of the total coastline) this region also enjoys the largest amount of publicly owned frontage (144.7 miles or 39.9% of statewide publicly owned frontage), principally due to 55 miles of National Seashore frontage. In other areas, 20.4% of the total publicly owned frontage is located along the North Shore, 15.2% on the Cape Islands, 9.0% in the Buzzards Bay region, 8.9% in the Metro Boston area, and 6.6% along the South Shore.

Clearly, there has been wide recognition of the importance of land ownership in influencing the use of the Massachusetts coastline. Less clear however, is the level of accessibility that is reflected in the protected coastline figures presented in this report. A number of constraints to coastal access exist, even for those lands considered publicly owned or available. These include:

- physical constraints, such as fragile coastal resources or lack of available parking
- restrictive policies on parking and access
- remoteness of some of the protected lands (in the case of several protected islands or certain areas of the Cape Cod National Seashore).

(The following chapter explores the extent of true coastal access to Massachusetts beaches in the face of these obstacles.)

Nevertheless, a strong foundation of publicly owned lands does exist. Continued recognition of the importance of these publicly owned lands is essential if the Commonwealth is to meet the needs of an ever-increasing demand for use and enjoyment of the coast.



Publicly Owned Lands Inventory

Table 1: Ownership

	Department	Coastal Frontage (in feet)	Coastal Frontage (in miles)	As a % of Total Publicly Owned Frontage
Federal Government	National Park Service	291,100	55.13	
	Fish and Wildlife Service	188,036	35.61	
	Army Corps of Engineers	27,648	5.24	
	Other	12,742	2.42	
	SUBTOTAL	519,526	98.40	27.1%
State Government	Dept. of Environmental Management	167,965	31.81	
	Metropolitan District Commission	134,899	25.55	
	Dept. of Fisheries,Wildlife and ELE	29,500	5.59	
	Other	2,700	0.51	
	SUBTOTAL	335,064	63.46	17.5%
County Governments		17,250	3.27	0.9%
Municipal Governments		677,377	128.29	35.4%
Private Nonprofit	The Trustees of Reservations	188,706	35.74	
	Mass. Audubon Society	88,500	16.76	
	Nantucket Conservation Foundation	82,156	15.56	
	Other	6,514	1.23	
	SUBTOTAL	365,876	69.29	19.1%
	TOTAL	1,915,093	362.71	100.0%

NOTE: The publicly owned coastal frontage information contained in this table is derived from a 1986-87 survey of coastal landowners, verified against municipal records.

Table 2: Coastal Frontage by Region

	Total Coastal Frontage (miles)	Total Frontage as a % of total Statewide Frontage	Publicly Owned Frontage		
			Total	As a % of Total Coastal Frontage	As a % of Total Publicly Owned Frontage Statewide
North Shore	192.75	14.4%	74.1	38.4%	20.4%
Metro Boston	100.83	7.5%	32.4	32.1%	8.9%
South Shore	135.07	10.1%	23.8	17.6%	6.6%
Buzzards Bay	212.25	15.8%	32.7	15.4%	9.0%
Cape Cod	427.27	31.8%	144.7	33.9%	39.9%
Cape Islands	274.14	20.4%	55.0	20.0%	15.2%
STATEWIDE	1342.31	100.0%	362.7	27.0%	100.0%

Table 2: Coastal Frontage by Region (continued)

Region	Municipal	State	Federal	Nonprofit	Other
North Shore	29.06	13.20	20.03	11.79	0
Metro Boston	11.57	20.80	0.00	0.00	0
South Shore	9.33	9.43	0.00	5.05	0
Buzzards Bay	15.61	9.96	4.10	3.07	0
Cape Cod	55.05	4.49	73.72	11.48	0
Cape Islands	7.67	5.58	0.54	37.91	3.27
Statewide	128.29	63.46	98.39	69.29	3.27

Ownership of Publicly Owned Frontage

Coastal Region Geographic Breakdown
North Shore.....Salisbury south to Saugus
Metro Boston.....Revere south to Quincy
South Shore..... Weymouth south to Plymouth
Buzzards Bay..... Swansea east to Wareham (Including Mt. Hope Bay)
Cape Cod.....all of Barnstable County
Cape Islands..... all of Dukes and Nantucket counties

Table 3: Coastal Frontage by Municipality

Municipality	Total Coastal Frontage	Publicly Owned Coastal Frontage	% of Total Frontage Publicly Owned	Total Frontage as a % of Total Regional Frontage	Publicly Owned Frontage as a % of Total Publicly Owned Regional Frontage
Beverly	10.58	0.94	8.9%	5.5%	1.3%
Essex	3.03	1.52	50.2%	1.6%	2.1%
Gloucester	47.19	4.74	10.0%	24.5%	6.4%
Ipswich	22.99	18.55	80.7%	11.9%	25.0%
Lynn	4.38	1.18	26.9%	2.3%	1.6%
Manchester	11.85	1.82	15.4%	6.1%	2.5%
Marblehead	16.22	2.69	16.6%	8.4%	3.6%
Nahant	11.49	5.03	43.8%	6.0%	6.8%
Newbury	12.69	6.89	54.3%	6.6%	9.3%
Newburyport	7.11	0.80	11.3%	3.7%	1.1%
Rockport	14.74	12.33	83.6%	7.6%	16.6%
Rowley	8.20	6.72	82.0%	4.3%	9.1%
Salem	11.22	5.63	50.2%	5.8%	7.6%
Salisbury	6.90	4.92	71.3%	3.6%	6.6%
Saugus	0.36			0.2%	
Swampscott	3.80	0.33	8.7%	2.0%	0.4%
SUBTOTAL	192.75	74.08	38.4%	100.0%	100.0%

North Shore Coastal Region

Table 3: Coastal Frontage by Municipality (continued)

	Municipality	Total Coastal Frontage	Publicly Owned Coastal Frontage	% of Total Frontage Publicly Owned	Total Frontage as a % of Total Regional Frontage	Publicly Owned Frontage as a % of Total Publicly Owned Regional Frontage
Metro Boston Coastal Region	Boston	59.77	21.76	36.4%	59.3%	67.2%
	Chelsea	0.42			0.4%	
	Quincy	25.95	4.58	17.6%	25.7%	14.1%
	Revere	4.92	2.84	57.7%	4.9%	8.8%
	Winthrop	9.77	3.19	32.7%	9.7%	9.9%
	SUBTOTAL	100.83	32.37	32.1%	100.0%	100.0%
South Shore Coastal Region	Cohasset	6.12	0.21	3.4%	4.5%	0.8%
	Duxbury	21.86	0.53	2.4%	16.2%	2.2%
	Hingham	12.17	7.19	59.1%	9.0%	30.2%
	Hull	22.65	5.91	26.1%	16.8%	24.8%
	Kingston	1.90	0.27	14.2%	1.4%	1.1%
	Marshfield	8.83	1.61	18.2%	6.5%	6.8%
	Plymouth	33.45	2.88	8.6%	24.8%	12.1%
	Scituate	19.66	1.66	8.4%	14.6%	7.0%
	Weymouth	8.43	3.56	42.2%	6.2%	15.0%
	SUBTOTAL	135.07	23.81	17.6%	100.0%	100.0%
Buzzards Bay Coastal Region	Dartmouth	29.11	5.59	19.2%	13.7%	17.1%
	Fairhaven	27.76	4.90	17.7%	13.1%	15.0%
	Fall River	5.05	0.21	4.2%	2.4%	0.6%
	Marion	22.98	1.02	4.4%	10.8%	3.1%
	Mattapoisett	18.83	1.17	6.2%	8.9%	3.6%
	New Bedford	12.05	4.75	39.4%	5.7%	14.5%
	Somerset	5.57			2.6%	
	Swansea	5.41	1.07	19.8%	2.5%	3.3%
	Wareham	37.16	8.82	23.7%	17.5%	26.9%
	Westport	48.33	5.20	10.8%	22.8%	15.9%
	SUBTOTAL	212.25	32.73	15.4%	100.0%	100.0%
Cape Cod Coastal Region	Barnstable	60.89	9.77	16.0%	14.3%	6.8%
	Bourne	49.23	5.95	12.1%	11.5%	4.1%
	Brewster	5.80	4.24	73.1%	1.4%	2.9%
	Chatham	59.64	36.64	61.4%	14.0%	25.3%
	Dennis	13.98	6.62	47.4%	3.3%	4.6%
	Eastham	29.88	7.80	26.1%	7.0%	5.4%
	Falmouth	44.91	5.94	13.2%	10.5%	4.1%
	Harwich	8.05	0.96	11.9%	1.9%	0.7%
	Mashpee	15.04	2.96	19.7%	3.5%	2.0%
	Orleans	31.86	14.03	44.0%	7.5%	9.7%
	Provincetown	24.06	15.07	62.6%	5.6%	10.4%
	Sandwich	11.36	0.89	7.8%	2.7%	0.6%
	Truro	20.43	12.26	60.0%	4.8%	8.5%
	Wellfleet	35.53	20.22	56.9%	8.3%	14.0%
	Yarmouth	16.61	1.38	8.3%	3.9%	1.0%
	SUBTOTAL	427.27	144.74	34.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3: Coastal Frontage by Municipality (continued)

Municipality	Total Coastal Frontage	Publicly Owned Coastal Frontage	% of Total Frontage Publicly Owned	Total Frontage as a % of Total Regional Frontage	Publicly Owned Frontage as a % of Total Publicly Owned Regional Frontage
Chilmark	21.52	2.78	12.9%	7.9%	5.1%
Edgartown	56.72	12.16	21.4%	20.7%	22.1%
Gay Head	10.23	1.84	18.0%	3.7%	3.3%
Gosnold	56.73	2.42	4.3%	20.7%	4.4%
Nantucket	90.62	33.07	36.5%	33.1%	60.2%
Oak Bluffs	14.35	1.13	7.9%	5.2%	2.1%
Tisbury	16.18	0.41	2.5%	5.9%	0.7%
West Tisbury	7.79	1.15	14.8%	2.8%	2.1%
SUBTOTAL	274.14	54.97	20.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6. Sand and rocks blend to provide a tranquil setting at Plum Island State Reservation in Ipswich.

6.

Part Two

Publicly Owned Coastal Recreational Beaches of the Commonwealth

Extent, Distribution and Accessibility

7. A couple walks along the elevated boardwalk at Plum Island.

Introduction

Over the last half century the coastline has also played an increasingly significant role in satisfying the recreational desires of Commonwealth residents . . .

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its residents have enjoyed the beauty and resources of its shoreline for centuries. The Massachusetts coastline historically has been an important resource for commercial enterprises as well.

Over the last half century the coastline has also played an increasingly significant role in satisfying the recreational desires of Commonwealth residents and visitors. In response to the recreational demand for coastal waters, oceanfront lands have been acquired specifically for public use, and numerous facilities have been built to accommodate the ever-increasing population coming to the shore for recreation.

Coastal beaches are enormously popular recreation spots. New England summers are traditionally marked by a rush to the beaches — with subsequent early-morning closings at many of the publicly owned beach facilities along the Massachusetts shore. According to the 1988-1992 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, demand for the "development and expansion of ocean access and of water-related recreation facilities" continues to outstrip the supply of recreation facilities along the coast.

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The purpose of this report is to present the extent and location of the publicly owned coastline in Massachusetts that is available for recreational beach use and to explore how much of that beach frontage is truly accessible to the general public.

8. **How crowded does a Massachusetts beach get? Horseneck Beach State Reservation in Westport.**

9. **Plum Island, Ipswich.**

"Accessibility" refers to the ability of the general public to use a beach. "Limited accessibility" refers to the physical and legal factors restricting the public use of beaches . . .

For the purpose of this report, a "coastal beach available for recreation" will be defined as a sandy stretch of publicly owned land from which saltwater swimming takes place. "Publicly owned beaches" are those owned by federal, state, county, or municipal entities, or by nonprofit land conservation organizations.

"Accessibility" refers to the ability of the general public to use a beach. "Limited accessibility" refers to the physical and legal factors restricting the public use of beaches. Qualifications of limited accessibility would be:

- lack of parking and no available mass transit
- inadequate parking (less than 5 spaces per 100 feet of beach)
- available parking spaces are limited to municipal residents only
- the beach is located on an island not served by mass transit
- the beach is located one half-mile or more from the nearest vehicular access point.

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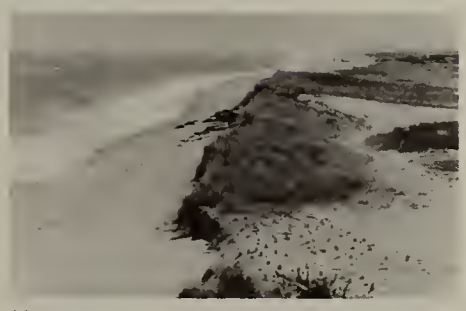
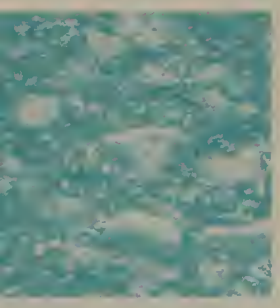


11.

10. Aerial view of a crowded oceanfront.

11. South Beach, Edgartown in winter.

Extent and Distribution



The Cape Cod region contains more than half (53.9%) of the publicly owned frontage with 100.81 miles.

Of the 671 publicly owned coastal properties in Massachusetts comprising 362.7 miles of coastal frontage, 325 are beaches totalling 186.9 miles of frontage. The Cape Cod region contains more than half (53.9%) of the publicly owned frontage with 100.81 miles. The North Shore region accounts for 20.4% of the total public beach frontage available for recreation with 38.12 miles. The Buzzards Bay region has 7.8 percent of the beach frontage, or 14.61 miles, while the Metro Boston region has 14.24 miles of coastal beach available for recreation, or 7.6% of the total beach frontage. Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket (the Island region) account for 6.4% of the total beach frontage, or 11.89 miles. Finally, within the South Shore region — the coastal region with the least public beach frontage — comprises 7.26 miles, or 3.9% of the total public frontage.

12.

12. White Horse Beach in Plymouth.

The key factors restricting the public's access to coastal beaches are the extensive ownership of coastal property and the ramifications of the Colonial Ordinance. . .

The key factors restricting the public's access to coastal beaches are the extensive private ownership of coastal property and the ramifications of the Colonial Ordinance — a centuries-old law which prevents the general public from using that portion of privately owned beach landward of the low tide mark for any purpose other than fishing, hunting or navigating.

While the Colonial Ordinance restricts the use of privately owned beaches, other factors limit the accessibility of public beaches for recreational use. Limited parking often restricts the number of people able to access a public beach facility. In some cases no parking at all is available, while in other instances only off-street parking or very small lots are provided for beachgoers.

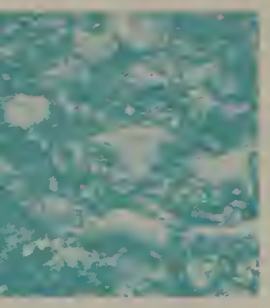
Remoteness is another factor in limiting the public's use of beach frontage. In some cases extremely long stretches of beach are accessible only by one parking lot, leaving the outer reaches of the beach miles from the nearest parking spaces. In other cases publicly owned beaches are located on islands that can't be reached by public transportation. In these instances users are able to reach the beaches only if they have access to a private boat.

A third factor serving to limit public beach access is the increasingly common practice of restricting to town residents only the use of town-owned lots that serve beachgoers. While the general public can still use the beach, they are not able to park in reasonable proximity to the facility, effectively limiting beach use to residents only. At present, at least 50 of the 325 publicly owned beach stretches in the Commonwealth have parking lots that are open only to residents of the particular municipality in which the beach is located. All factors considered, a total of 110.5 miles or 59% of all publicly owned coastal beach frontage has limited accessibility for the general public.

A further barrier to accessibility not covered under the scope of this report involves fees charged for beach parking. Increasingly, parking lot owners are raising fees for beach parking. In some cases municipalities are requiring stickers for parking at town-owned parking lots, while charging higher rates to non-residents than to residents.

13. **Residents-only parking restricts access to public beaches.**

Conclusion



The Commonwealth is fortunate to have such a large number and variety of public beaches available. Unfortunately, . . . access to these public beaches is more problematic.

As a result of the limitations imposed by the Colonial Ordinance, public use of the Commonwealth's shoreline is severely limited. While public activities involving fishing, hunting and navigating are allowed by right in the intertidal zone, private landowners along the coast are able to prevent other activities from taking place. As a result, unless a private landowner expressly allows entrance, only publicly owned beach facilities are available to the general public for those recreational uses commonly associated with coastal beaches.

The Commonwealth is fortunate to have such a large number and variety of public beaches available. Almost half the publicly owned coastal properties in the Commonwealth (325) contain beach frontage available for recreation. Further, slightly more than half of publicly owned coastal frontage is considered beach.

Unfortunately, the ability of the general public to gain access to these public beaches is more problematic. Geographically, the vast majority of the public beach frontage (74.3%) is concentrated in only two coastal regions, Cape Cod and the North Shore. The remaining four coastal regions are home to only one quarter of the total beach frontage available in the Commonwealth.

In addition, several other factors combine to limit, and in some cases prohibit, access to publicly owned beaches. The factors—inadequate parking, parking restrictions to residents only, absence of parking transportation, distance from vehicular access—effectively limit access to 59% (110.5 miles) of publicly owned beach frontage available for recreation. As the demand for beach use increases and the supply of accessible beach frontage declines, the beach access problems will only be exacerbated.

Coastal beaches are an integral part of the heritage of the Commonwealth. Whether enjoyed on a sultry summer day or explored during the snowy season, saltwater beaches are a vital resource to residents and nonresidents alike. It is the responsibility of all levels of government to preserve existing coastal beaches, make accessible those beach facilities that are now unavailable to the general public, and to protect additional beach resources for today and future generations.

14.

15.

14. During the fall and winter, DEM staff erect snow fences which help protect dune systems by trapping wind-blown sand and keeping it on the beach.

15. Beaches are for horses, too.

Table 1: Total Publicly Owned Beach Frontage – by Coastal Region

	Number of Region Beaches	Beach Frontage (feet)	(miles)	Public Beach Frontage as a % of Total Public Beach Frontage
Buzzards Bay	36	77,120	14.61	7.8%
Cape Cod	147	532,263	100.81	53.9%
Metro Boston	27	75,166	14.24	7.6%
North Shore	56	201,250	38.12	20.4%
South Shore	32	38,312	7.26	3.9%
The Islands	27	62,775	11.89	6.4%
TOTAL	325	986,886	186.91	100.0%

Coastal Region Geographic Breakdown
North Shore.....Salisbury south to Saugus
Metro Boston.....Revere south to Quincy
South Shore.....Weymouth south to Plymouth
Buzzards Bay.....Swansea east to Wareham (Including Mt. Hope Bay)
Cape Cod.....all of Barnstable County
Cape Islands.....all of Dukes and Nantucket counties

Table 2: Public Beaches with Limited Access – by Coastal Region

	Limited Access		Adequate Access	
	# of Beaches	Frontage (miles)	# of Beaches	Frontage (miles)
Buzzards Bay	21	5.51	15	9.10
Cape Cod	72	75.90	79	24.91
Metro Boston	6	0.80	21	13.44
North Shore	37	16.64	19	21.48
South Shore	17	4.20	15	3.06
The Islands	11	7.50	16	4.39
TOTAL	164	110.55	166	76.38

NOTE: The total number of beaches with limited or adequate access does not equal the total number of beaches (325) because four National Seashore beaches are included in both access categories, since only portions of each of these four beaches have been determined to be accessible.

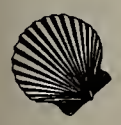


Table 3: Characteristics of Publicly Owned Beaches – by Ownership

Owner	Number of Beaches	Beach Frontage (feet)	(miles)	Public Beach Frontage as a % of Total Public Beach Frontage
Federal	9	306,723	58.1	31.1%
State	24	180,049	34.1	18.2%
County	2	17,250	3.3	1.8%
Municipal	285	439,619	83.3	44.6%
Nonprofit	5	43,245	8.2	4.4%
TOTAL	325	986,886	186.90	100.0%

Table 4: Ownership of Public Beach Frontage – by Region

Region	Federal	State	County	Municipal	Nonprofit
Buzzards Bay	0	6.21	0	8.39	0
Cape Cod	51.99	1.80	0	45.83	1.19
Metro Boston	0	12.58	0	1.66	0
North Shore	6.10	8.95	0	16.85	6.21
South Shore	0	1.40	0	5.86	0
The Islands	0	3.16	3.27	4.68	0.79
TOTAL	58.09	34.10	3.27	83.27	8.19